

CREATING A LIBRARY SERVICE FOR SCHOLARLY OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

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Introduction

In 2008 the University of Bergen Library started a project for supporting independent open access journals at the University of Bergen.¹ The service was aimed at already existing journals that wanted to convert to an open access model, and to research groups that planned to establish a new electronic journal with open content.

This paper will focus on the experience gained from serving the scholarly open access journals at the University of Bergen Library – first and foremost the challenges connected with establishing such a service. There is also the question as to what degree libraries should offer this kind of publishing service: should academic libraries act as publishers of scholarly journals?

Objective

The objective of the project at the University of Bergen Library was to assist research groups in creating their own journals and train editors in using the software. The library would have knowledge about how to establish and manage scholarly journals, and be able to act as a coordinator, offer technical support as well as enhance visibility and ensure permanent archiving of articles. The editors themselves would have the responsibility to manage and publish their own journals. A further goal of the project was to capitalise on this knowledge in order to create a nationally coordinated library service and a user group for open access journals. Such a service would make it easier for libraries and journal editors to cooperate on solutions and share experiences.

The Project

Software

The University of Bergen Library decided to use the software Open Journal Systems (OJS) for the journals connected to the project.² OJS is open source software created by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP). It is free, easy to install, and offers a system that is simple to understand and manage for journal editors. An important argument for choosing OJS is that it is used by over 2000 journals worldwide, which means that it has a high degree of sustainability, and there is an active user group working with the system.³

The Public Knowledge Project also offers similar systems for managing and publishing other types of research material. Open Conference Systems (OCS)⁴ is software for administrating conferences and publishing conference items that has many of the same functions as OJS. In addition, the PKP project is developing software for publishing monographs called Open Monograph Press (OMP).⁵ Even though it was not part of the initial project to offer an open access publishing system for such material, the library knew that research groups would be interested in such an option. Obtaining knowledge of these systems would therefore be an additional value for the library in a long term perspective.

Scope

An open access journal is a journal where all content is openly and immediately accessible online in full text. In OJS it is possible to choose different layers of access; all open content, some open content, or a fully subscription model. The University of Bergen Library initially wanted to support journals that were fully open access, but decided that the service would also be given to journals with hybrid or delayed options for open access. This choice was taken because some journals are, or feel that they are, still dependent of subscriptions to survive economically.

Furthermore, the library discussed if it should demand some kind of quality level of journals that should

¹ Bergen Open Access Publishing (BOAP). The project received funding from Norwegian Open Research Archives (NORA), the Norwegian project for institutional repositories. There is also a Nordic project for aiding scholarly journals towards open access publishing (NOAP). This project used some journals as case studies, but did not have the objective to give on-hand support to new journals. The NOAP project ended in august 2009, and the experience gained will hopefully be used by academic libraries and research institutions that wish to support independent journals towards open access publishing. More information on the NOAP wiki: http://www.ub.uib.no/wiki/noap/index.php/NOAP_project

² The library also tested journal management software, DPubS (Digital Publishing System): <http://dpubs.org/> DPubS is an open-source software system designed for scholarly journals, monographs and conference proceedings. The library decided against DPubS partly because it is a less user friendly system than OJS.

³ The Public Knowledge Project web site: <http://pkp.sfu.ca/>

⁴ OCS: <http://pkp.sfu.ca/?q=ocs>

⁵ OMP: <http://pkp.sfu.ca/omp>

receive support. The question was whether the library should support only peer reviewed journals or whether non-peer reviewed journals should be accepted as well. Open access journals have been criticized because of their less consistent quality, and one way to meet this criticism would be to demand new independent, open access journals – that receive support from the library – to be peer reviewed. The library, however, felt that it was not the library, but the editorial team themselves that should be responsible for the quality (as well as the content) of the journals. The University of Bergen library therefore decided to offer support also for non peer reviewed scholarly journal as a part of the project.

The journals

The project was initiated by a request from a research group in music therapy (GAMUT) connected to the University of Bergen. This research group contacted the library because they wanted assistance in order to find a sustainable model for online, open publishing for the already existing printed journal *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy (NJMT)*,⁶ a high ranked journal in the Norwegian publication system. GAMUT also wished to check out OJS for their already existing open access journal *Voices (A World Forum for Music Therapy)*.⁷ The editors were initially positive to an open access publishing model for both their journals, as they already had seen the benefits of open access publishing for *Voices*. However, they found it difficult to find enough resources to continue to publish their journals independently, and therefore wanted the University of Bergen library to assist in finding an alternative model for their journals to commercial publishing.

In the summer of 2008 *NJMT* accepted an offer from Taylor & Francis for taking over the publishing of the journal. Although the editors initially were interested in finding possible solutions for managing the journal after an open access model, the expense and time used on managing *NJMT* independently made them accept the offer from Taylor & Francis. The library could not, at this time, offer support for an alternative solution so that the editors could continue to publish the journal independently.

The other journal published by GAMUT, *Voices*, had a different focus than *NJMT*. It had always been important for the editors to keep managing the journal after an open access model. Many of the contributors and readers are from third world countries. The editors of *Voices* wanted a system that would enable administrating different types of content in the same system. *Voices* consist not only of articles, but also columns and discussion forums. The library therefore tried to integrate OJS with the content management

platform Drupal,⁸ which could be used for presenting the other material. This has already been done by other journals using OJS, but the library found that the systems would demand competence not existing at the library at the time.

The situation today is that *Voices* has not yet started publishing on OJS, but the journal is planning to publish the first issue on the new platform in 2009. The experience with *Voices* shows that it is more difficult for already existing journals to convert to a new system, partly because material needs to be moved and converted, and partly as a result of the need to change routines and administration.

Nordic Journal of Information Literacy in Higher Education (NORIL) is a journal that is administrated by the library of [psychology, education and health](http://www.uib.no/psychology_education_and_health) at the University of Bergen.⁹ This journal started implementing the OJS software already in 2007, and the first issue of the journal was published in February 2009. Much of the experience from *NORIL* has benefitted the work with other journals connected to the project when it comes to using the software, design of web pages, administrating content and users, and general competence on what is necessary to think about when starting a new journal.

SMH-nytt is a non peer-reviewed journal published by the special group for medicine and health subjects in Norway.¹⁰ In 2008 *SMH-nytt* decided to convert their already existing paper journal to an electronic platform. The editors contacted the University of Bergen Library because they had heard of the publishing support given by the project. This journal is not connected to the University of Bergen, but the library still decided to host the journal on their server and give training in OJS. An OJS application for the journal was installed in the autumn of 2008, and the first issue was published in December the same year.

The University of Bergen Library has been in contact with several research groups from the University, and also outside the institution, that have showed interest in starting a new open access journal, converting an already existing journal to an open access model, or to find electronic publishing solutions for books or research reports. It is usually the financial issues that make journal editors decide against going over to an open access model. Many of them still feel dependent on subscriptions, and this is especially true for printed journals.

Hosting

Several different solutions for hosting the journals have been examined – including hosting services offered

⁶ NJMT: <http://www.njmt.no/>

⁷ Voices: <http://www.voices.no/>

⁸ Drupal: <http://drupal.org/project/drupal>

⁹ NORIL: <https://noril.uib.no/index.php/noril>

¹⁰ SMH-nytt: <http://boap.uib.no/journals/index.php/smh>

through PKP,¹¹ OASPA,¹² and national solutions through the library consortium. Yet, the University of Bergen Library found that the cheapest solution for the journal would be to offer hosting through the University Library itself. The library pays for the server and OJS application, which for the library constitutes a minor expense in the overall budget. In the beginning the library installed a separate OJS for each journal connected to the project. However, development of the software, allowing individual design for journals, has made it possible for the library to install the journals on one OJS application. The library is now in the process of moving most of the journals to one application. The exception is *Voices* that will need special adjustments. Other academic libraries in Norway that offer a service for OJS are providing similar hosting solutions. Hosting is one of the places where libraries can contribute to the financial situation of individual journals.

Training

The University of Bergen library has given several journal editors training in using OJS in the project period. So far individual training has been given to each journal. More training and sharing of experience is needed, and this could be done by arranging a workshop in OJS. There is a need, not only to learn more about functionality in OJS, but also to share experiences and take up issues that concern independent open access journals in general. There has also been expressed a need for establishing a national user group for libraries and editors that use OJS.

Adding value to the journals

The library staff have knowledge of how and where to index the journals for increased visibility. OJS is adapted to the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) protocol for metadata harvesting (OAI-PMH), which makes content available in a range of search engines. OJS also has a Google Scholar plug-in that exports content for indexing and searching. An additional service for enhancing visibility is DOI by Crossref,¹³ which gives permanent links to articles. However, this may be a too expensive service for individual journals, thus offering an example where a national or institutional membership might be able to reduce the price. Moreover, the library has the possibility to ensure that articles are archived through the institutional repository or by indexing the journal in Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ),¹⁴ a service that also offers long term archiving solutions for

articles. Finally, the University of Bergen library has the competence to assist journal editors on copyright issues and different types of licenses for administrating rights and use of content.

It should also be mentioned, that several journal editors have wanted the library to offer solutions for assuring that articles in their journal to have the same quality formatting as those in journals published by commercial publishers. Yet, creating templates for each single journal is probably not a job for the library. On the other hand, the library should obtain competence on how to format documents so that they can guide journal editors. Some of these issues concerning quality of articles will probably find a solution through the ongoing PKP development of an easy to use application for formatting documents to publishing layout formats.¹⁵

Lessons learned: Should academic libraries become journal publishers?

When scientific publishing started out it was managed by research societies themselves, and it is only during the second half of the 20th century that most scholarly publishing has been taken over by commercial publishers, and turned into big business. Even though most journals today are published by major publishing houses, independent journals managed by the research communities themselves still exist. Most new journals start out independently, and it often takes time for a journal to achieve the economic sustainability and reputation for quality that will make commercial publishers interested. Also, there are many journals that continue to be managed by the research communities out of idealism and interest.

The development of electronic publishing and open source software has made it easier for research groups to establish and manage their own journals. Research groups are able to manage their own electronic journals at low expense with the support from academic libraries or research institutions on hosting the journal and giving technical support. Journal editors and libraries can share work resources, costs, and competence necessary in order to manage independent journals. This is a way for academic libraries to support open access publishing at their institution.

The project at the University of Bergen Library has shown that there is a demand for this type of publishing service at the institution. Consequently, and to return to the initial question: university libraries should, if not act as publishers, at least facilitate open access initiatives by providing the

¹¹ PKP offers hosting through the Simon Fraser University (SFU): <http://pkp.sfu.ca/commercial>

¹² The Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, OASPA, offers hosting through Scholarly Exchange (SE): <http://www.scholarlyexchange.org/index.html>

¹³ Crossref: <http://www.crossref.org/>

¹⁴ DOAJ: <http://www.doaj.org/>

¹⁵ Lemon8-XML: <http://pkp.sfu.ca/lemon8>

know-how and the infrastructure for supporting independent scholarly journals towards open access publishing.



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